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Making Connections: Linking Course Concepts with Industry Practices Through Pinterest

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Purpose and Basis for the Study

The major objective of implementing this class activity was to encourage students to apply course concepts learned in class to industry practices; making connections between what they learned and what is actually occurring in fashion apparel and related industries. An assignment of this kind is integral to student learning because when students have an avenue to connect course concepts with industry practices, they are more likely to retain information after the course is completed (Fink, 2013). According to Fink (2013), significant learning and retaining of course materials occurs when instructors can implement new ways of teaching by integrating experimental learning activities. Such activities, where students are encouraged to make connections between topics covered in class and actual experiences, may be an effective practice to ensure what is taught in class is recalled and applied when students are working in their field of study.

Pintest has been shown to be an effective tool to integrate into course assignments (Fowler, 2013). This social media site can serve as a useful tool for students to connect course concepts with industry practices because social networking sites like Pinterest are an effective platform at sharing thoughts and interacting with others with similar interests. For this reason, social media sites like Pinterest are increasingly being integrated into course assignments (Moran, Seaman, and Tinti-Kane, 2011). Furthermore, given that the student population is familiar with social media and likely to use Pinterest in their everyday activities, this social media tool is considered to be an effective avenue for students to make course connections with industry practices.

Procedure

In a foundational consumer behavior in fashion class, using Fowler's (2013) procedure as a guideline, the project was implemented by first assigning students into groups and were instructed to create a group board on Pinterest, where only their group members and the instructor could view and have access to (a.k.a. a secret board on Pinterest). A Pinterest board, similar to a bulletin board, is a medium where students can create a collage by importing various images from anywhere online. In this project, the purpose of using the Pinterest board was to provide an outlet where students could take concepts covered in the class, and find an image online that related to or further explained the course concepts and topics. The benefit of using this online bulletin board is that students can connect course concepts to industry practices visually and in written form.

To provide an example for students and to encourage students to make greater connections between course concepts and industry practices, the instructor of the course created

an example Pinterest board and included class concepts both visually and in written form. For each of the major topics covered in the chapters, the instructor included an image related to a course concept, and explained in written form the concept introduced and how the image related to the concept introduced, and students were encouraged to do the same.

In the course, students needed to complete a total of four Pinterest boards, one for each of the sections covered in the textbook, where each section covered four to five chapters. Feedback was given on the Pinterest board after each assignment and the instructor commented on the board itself and encouraged students to further make connections and apply course concepts to industry practices. To gain insight and feedback on what students learned and thought of the assignment, a survey was given that included both structured and open-ended questions.

Learning Outcomes

The responses from 46 students reported that they learned course concepts more by completing this assignment (78.2%), they were able to think more critically about course concepts (69.5%), reflect more deeply about class concepts (91.3%) and were able to think more about class concepts (84.8%). Students also felt they have a better grasp of course concepts (76%) because they were able to more effectively make connections between class concepts and fashion industry practices (80.4%). In fact, students indicated that by completing the assignment, they were able to “remember the concepts from class”, “were more engaged in class”, “think about the concepts in depth”, “grasps particular concepts much more easily” and students enjoyed “being able to make the connection between the course concepts and the real world”. The overwhelming positive responses indicated that not only students enjoyed working on the assignment, but were able to more effectively learn materials covered in class and apply and make connections between what they learned in class and the fashion industry.

Follow-up Plans

The majority of students reported that they would like to participate in similar projects in their other classes. Based on students' overall positive response, experiential learning projects such as this will continue to be implemented in order to encourage students to make greater connections between course concepts and industry practices. Encouraging students to connect in this way will help them recall and apply what they learned in class when working in their field of study. To increase student exposure of how particular concepts relate to industry practices, class presentations will be implemented in the future so that students can hear from other groups in their class and learn about the specific connections they made.

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